



Oakdale Academy Theatrical Dance Guide

Version 2.0

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Welcome to Oakdale Academy Theatrical Dance, and welcome to your Fleursoft Dance HUD. Because this is the free, open-source version of this HUD, the builder does not provide upgrades or active customer support for this HUD. However, you will receive plenty of help in getting started and building fun dances with this HUD through this guide, the Theatrical Dance staff, and experienced dancers!

This HUD is useable as a club-type dance HUD, and has many features to support club and party dance use. You are welcome and encouraged to use your HUD for any purpose to get proficient with the controls and have fun!

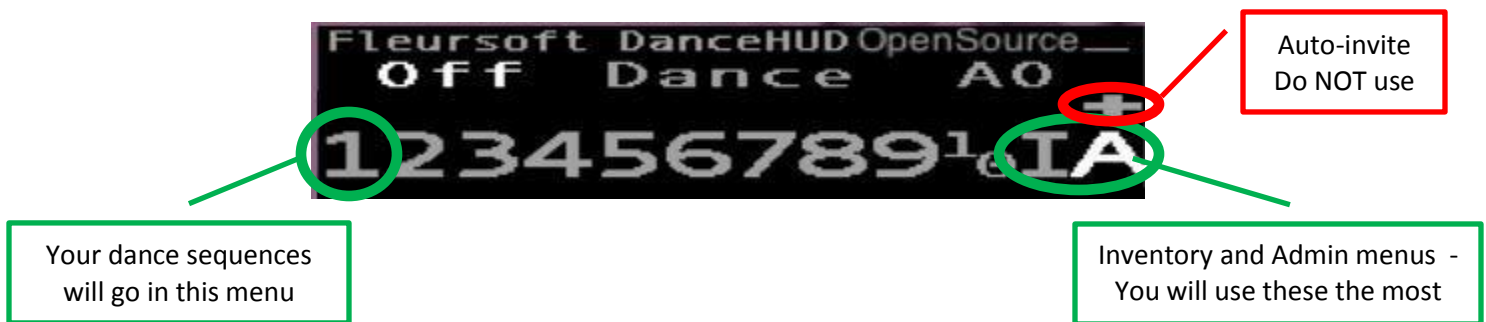
This guide, however, will just be focusing on the particular functions needed to create and operate dance routines for Theatrical Dance. If the HUD looks overwhelmingly complex to you, have no fear! We only use a small portion of the functions on this HUD for Theatrical Dance, so things will be fairly simple once you've used it a few times. For information on menu and control items not covered in this guide, you can refer to www.fleursoft.com.

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Top Control Area

The very top items in this area of the HUD indicate the mode the HUD is in. It will normally start in the “Off” mode, and will automatically change to “Dance” when you activate a dance, so you don’t need to normally worry about these. We do not use the “AO” mode. There is also a large “+” symbol on the far right side above the large “A.” If you click this “+” you will turn on the auto-invite function, and the HUD will begin inviting everyone around you to join your HUD. This is something you will NOT want to do in theatrical dance class or performances. If people tell you that your HUD is inviting them (and you did not intend for it to), simply click the “+” again to deselect it (should go from white to gray).



The second row of the top area has the controls we will normally use. Starting from the left, you will see the numbers 1 through 10. These correspond to User Menus where you can store and load the dance sequences you create. Normally, we will just be using Menu 1. On the far right side you will see a large “I” and “A”. Clicking each of these will bring you to the Inventory and Admin menus, respectively.

Note: When clicking controls and menu items on this HUD, it works best if you position the cursor/pointer at the **BOTTOM** of the item you want to click. If menu items are spaced closely, sometimes clicking an item towards the top edge will inadvertently select the item above. This can be worse on small displays, like laptops, where the HUD may be very cramped due to small size. This can be fixed by making the HUD larger on your display (see Change HUD height and width below, in the Administrative Menu section).

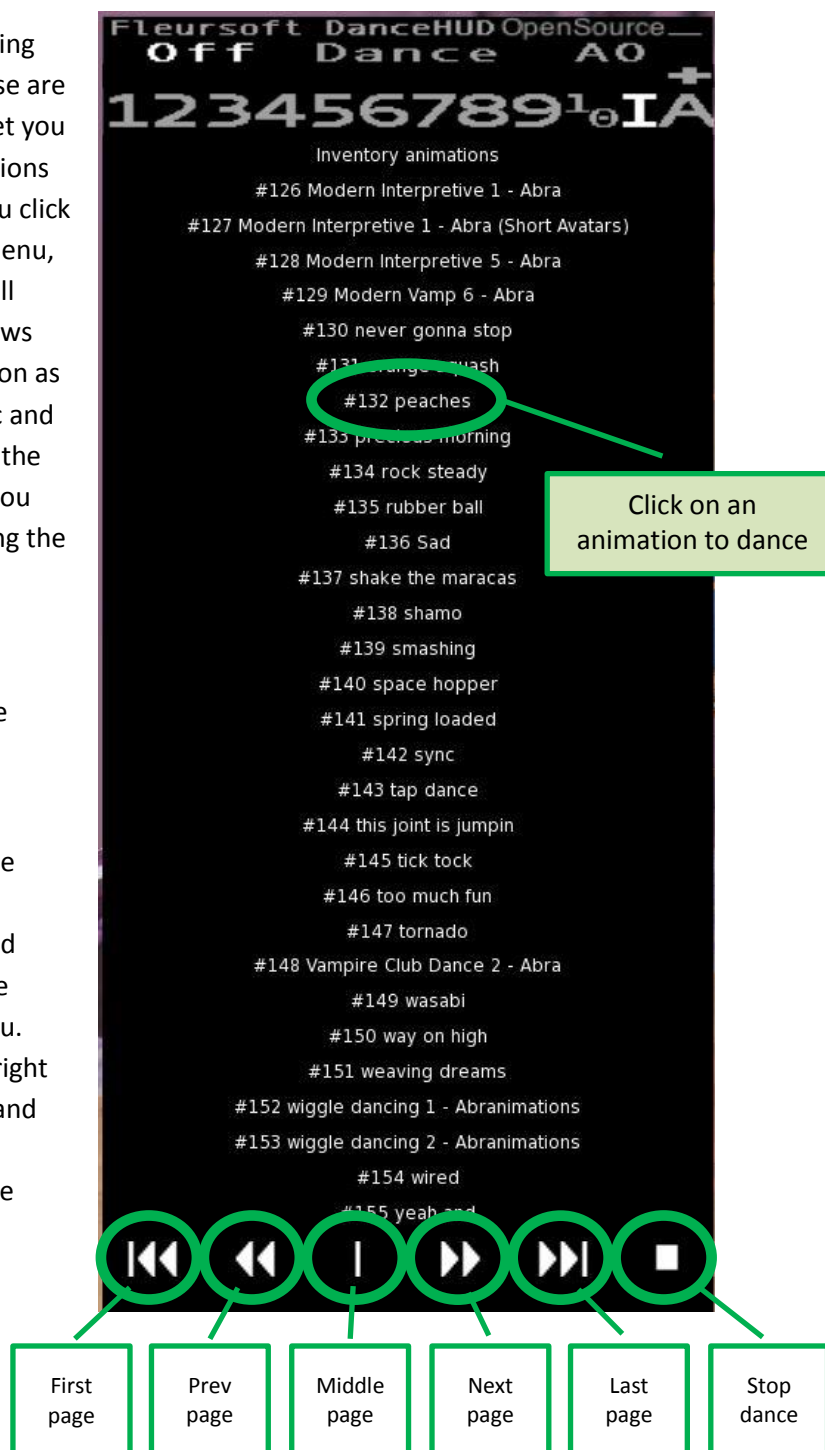
Inventory Menu

Clicking the large “I” on the top controls will bring you to a list of your Inventory Animations. These are all of the animations loaded in your HUD. To get you started, we have preloaded a variety of animations in your HUD. While wearing the HUD, when you click any of the animations listed in the Inventory Menu, the animation name will turn green and you will begin dancing the selected animation. This allows you to quickly jump from animation to animation as you try out various animations with your music and choreograph sequences. To stop dancing, click the stop (square) button on the bottom controls. You can sequence through the inventory pages using the arrows on the bottom controls.

Adding / removing animations

You can also add (or remove) animations to the HUD. To do this, you must follow these steps:

1. Rez a copy of the HUD onto the floor.
2. Right click > Edit the HUD and select the Contents tab.
3. To add animations to the HUD, click and drag them from your inventory into the Contents window of the HUD edit menu.
4. To remove animations from the HUD, right click on them in the contents window and select delete.
5. It is recommended that you rename the HUD copy to something meaningful to describe the dances you’ve loaded (such as the routine they are for) in the General tab before taking it back into inventory.
6. Right click > Take the HUD back into inventory.



Note: You should wait until the HUD contents refresh (item you added or deleted should appear or disappear) after each modification is made before continuing with adding or removing more animations or before taking the HUD back into inventory. This can take a few seconds, sometimes more.

Administrative Menu

The most important menu is the Admin Menu. It can be accessed by clicking the large 'A' on the far right side of the HUD. There are many sub-menus and settings that can be accessed from this menu. Only the items used in Theatrical Dance will be covered in this guide. Here are some of the most basic menu items to get you started:

Add / Remove Dancers

If you want other dancers to be controlled by your HUD, you must first add them. To invite dancers to join your HUD, click "Add dancers." This will bring up a menu of the 16 closest usernames in your vicinity. Select the desired dancers by clicking on their usernames in the list. Dancers must accept your invite to complete the process. You can also remove dancers from your HUD by clicking "Remove dancers" and following the same process.

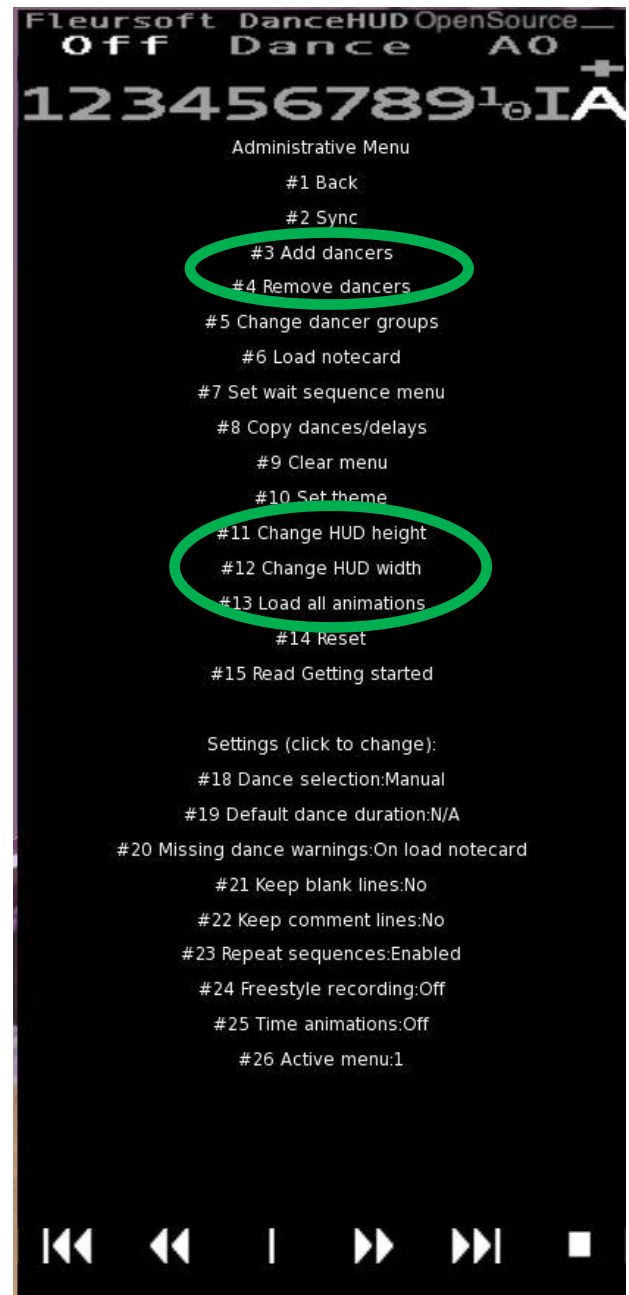
Change HUD Height and Width

If you are using a small display, such as a laptop, you may find that the HUD is cramped, with menu items so close together that it makes it hard to select individual items accurately. You can fix this by adjusting the height and/or width of the HUD by clicking the "Change HUD height" and "Change HUD width" items.

Load All Animations

Shortly before you perform, you may hear other dancers remind you to "warm up your HUD." What this means is that you need to ensure all of the dance animations you will be using are cached and ready to play instantly. If your dances are not cached, it will cause your sequence of dances to be interrupted with standing pauses between animations as each new one is loaded.

You can fix this problem by playing your entire dance sequence through once before you perform. However, this process is time consuming, so the Fleursoft HUD allows you to rapidly load all of the dance animations in your HUD in a matter of seconds by clicking "Load all animations." This is the fastest way to "warm up your HUD" and can be performed right before you begin.



Creating a Dance Sequence

Dance sequences are made up of a series of dance animations that play in order, each having a set amount of time to play before changing to the next animation. To create a dance, you will string these dances together to play along with your song. The sequences are defined on a notecard you create using a specific format, which is placed into the HUD contents and gets read by the HUD.

Single Dancer – Example

The basic format for a dance sequence notecard is as follows:

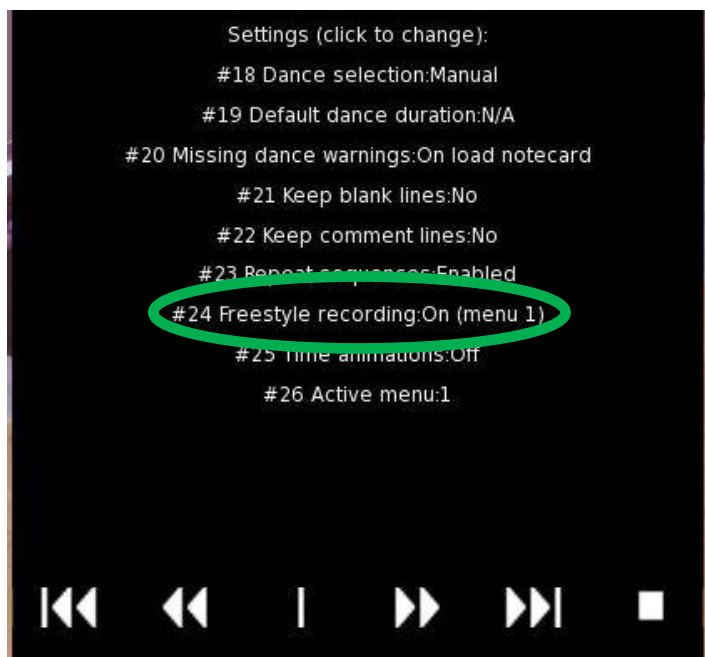
```
<name of animation1>|<duration>|<name of animation2>|<duration>| ...etc.
```

The names of the animations on the notecard must match the exact spelling and case (uppercase/lowercase characters) for names of the animations loaded into the HUD. If you have an animation on the notecard that does not match any animation loaded in the HUD, you will get an error displayed in local chat when the HUD tries to read the notecard. Notice that each animation and duration are separated by the “|” pipe character (located on the shift position of the “\” character on most keyboards). The duration is in seconds and can be specified down to tenths of second units, if desired (e.g. 8 = 8 seconds duration, 14.2 = 14.2 seconds duration).

You can manually type out an entire dance sequence into a notecard or you can create the text for the notecard by using the Freestyle Recording feature of the HUD. Freestyle Recording allows you to just click through dances on the Inventory Menu while your song plays and will record your actions. When you finish the song and push the stop button (square) at the bottom of the HUD, you will see a list of animation names and durations appear in the nearby chat window, which you can paste into a notecard.

Here is an example of using Freestyle Recording to create a short dance sequence and load it into the HUD:

Step 1: Go to the Admin Menu (click the big ‘A’) and click on Freestyle recording to toggle it from Off to On. You will notice that the item should say “#24 Freestyle recording:On (menu 1).” The HUD defaults to using Menu 1 as the location for your dance sequence. This can be changed by item “#26 Active menu” on the Admin Menu, but it is recommended to just leave this as menu 1 for all dance routines so they are always in the same place and easy to find.



Step 2: With Freestyle recording ON, go to the Inventory Menu (big 'I') and start clicking on dances. Normally, you will practice along with your song first and figure out all of the animations you want to use and where you want to transition each animation by cues you hear in the song. This is probably the most time-consuming part of creating a dance and takes a lot of times listening to your song over and over and trying different animations before you get to your final dance sequence. For this example, we are just clicking a few random animations for varying lengths of time. When you are complete, press the stop button (square) at the bottom, and you will see something similar to this in the local chat window:

```
[18:30] Fleursoft DanceHUD - Oakdale Dance Load: Starting recording of  
freestyle dance animation sequences to menu 1...  
[18:31] Fleursoft DanceHUD - Oakdale Dance Load: Added freestyle dance  
'FreeStyle 1' to menu 1  
[18:31] Fleursoft DanceHUD - Oakdale Dance Load: Sequence: FreeStyle  
1:precious morning|11.6|shake the maracas 1|18.6|tick tock|10.3|rubber  
ball|7.4|shamo|7.6
```

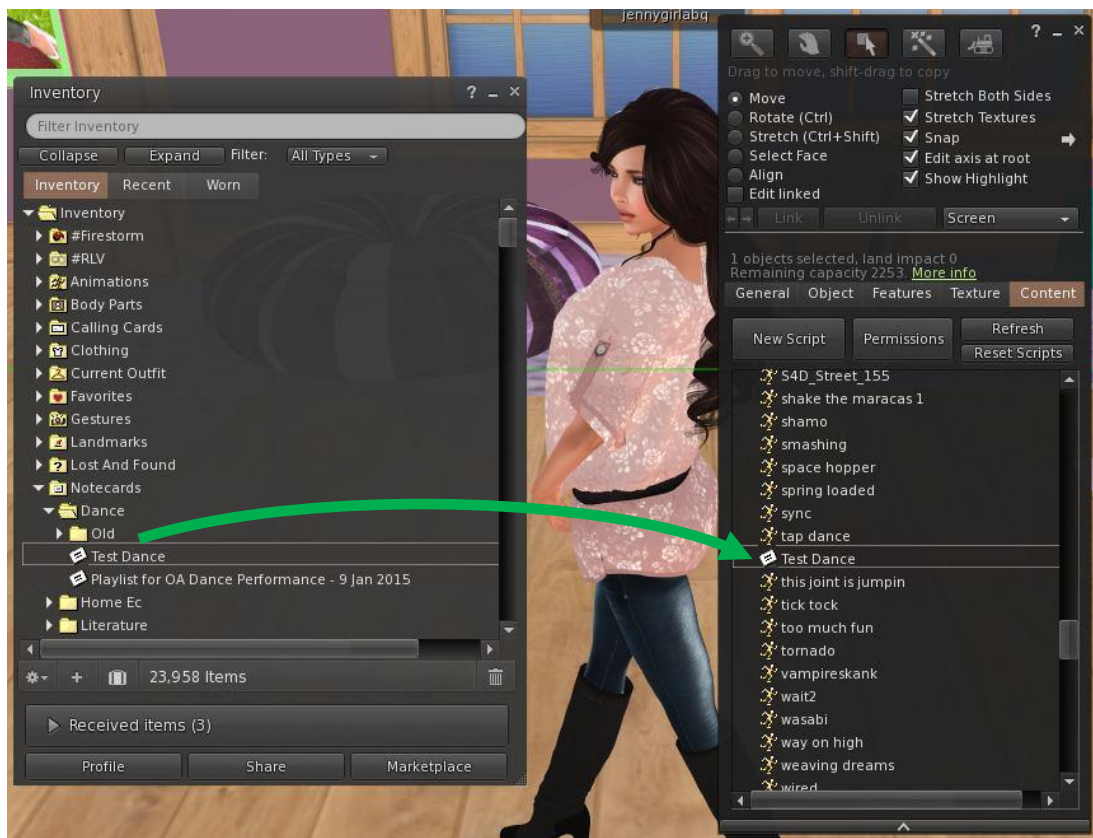
Step 3: Click Freestyle recording to turn it OFF.

Step 4: Open a new notecard and give it a name (probably the name of your song). In this example we called this notecard "Test Dance."

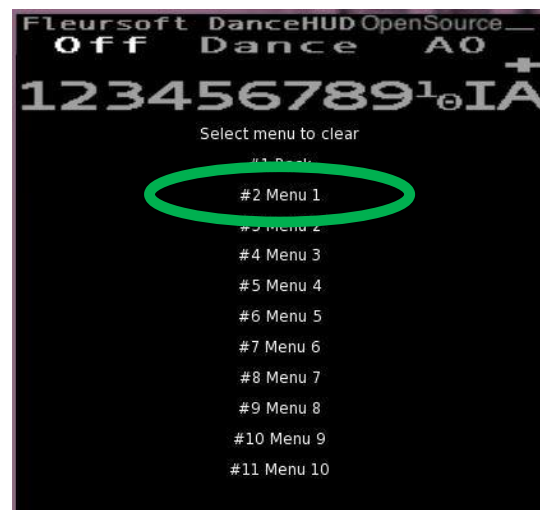
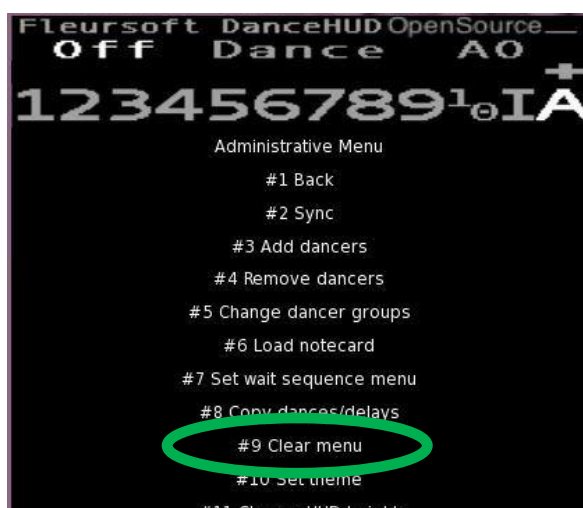
Step 5: Copy the dance text from nearby chat window and paste it into the notecard. It is important to note that there is some extra text in the chat that you do not want to copy. You should select the text that starts with the first character in your first animation name and ends after the last duration time of the last animation. If you see an animation at the beginning called something like "Stand," you want to select after that because the stand portion was before you started clicking dances. Here is an example showing the nearby text chat and the portion that was selected and pasted into the notecard:



Step 6: Save the notecard in your inventory. Right click > edit the HUD (you can be wearing it while you do this) and drag the notecard into the HUD contents.

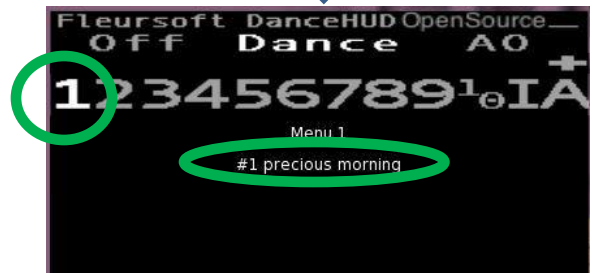
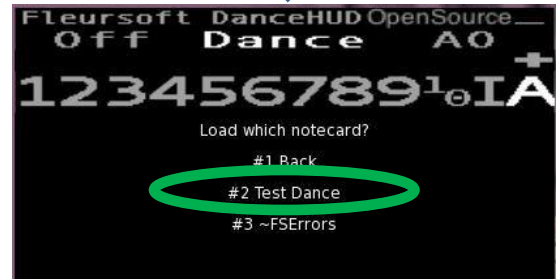
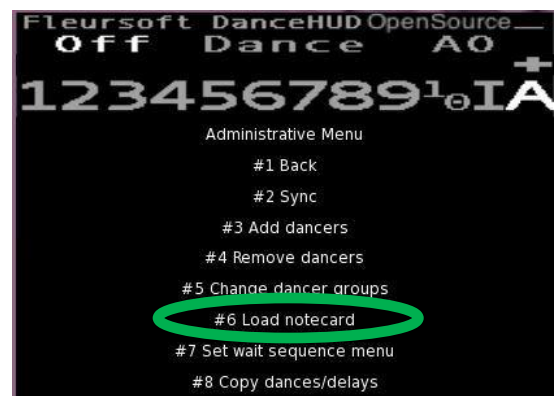


Step 7: Once you see the notecard appear in the HUD contents (may take a few seconds to refresh), close the edit menu for the HUD. On the Admin Menu, click item “#9 Clear menu” and select Menu 1 on the next menu that pops up. This will clear any old dance sequences that may have appeared on Menu 1 of the HUD.



Step 8: Go back to the Admin Menu and click item “#6 Load notecard” and select the notecard you just loaded into the HUD (in this case it is “Test Dance”). The HUD will begin reading the notecard and will let you know in nearby chat when it is complete. If it has any problems, you will see error messages at this time. One useful thing is to set one of the HUD settings on the Admin Menu to item “#20 Missing dance warnings:On load notecard.” This will notify you as soon as you load a new notecard if there are any animations that are in your dance sequence but not loaded into the HUD.

Step 9: Now you should see your dance sequence loaded into Menu 1 (click on big number 1 at the top left of the HUD). The dance sequence will be named after the first animation in your sequence. If you click this sequence, you will begin dancing through the entire sequence and duration of animations until it is complete. You can stop the dance at any time by clicking the stop button at the bottom of the HUD.



More on Notecards

Your dance notecards are not limited to pasting basic sequences from freestyle recording, as in the example above. You are free to modify anything in the notecard by hand, such as replacing an animation with a new one you like better (instead of having to re-record the entire sequence). You can also modify the time durations, which could be used to correct a transition that you clicked at the wrong point while recording. Keep in mind that when you change a duration value in the sequence, all of the following sequences will be shifted by the amount of the change. A good technique to fix this is to add or subtract the duration adjustment to the animation that immediately follows the one that was modified (i.e. if you subtracted 1.5 seconds from an animation, you can add 1.5 seconds to the following animation so all of the animations after that will transition at their original time).

There are also keywords that can be added to the notecards to perform various functions. Here are a few important notecard details and help on using two common keywords - [name] and [group]:

Limit on Line Lengths

Second Life has a limit of 255 characters per line that can be read by a script, so the HUD will run into this limit when it reads the notecard during the "Load notecard" process. However, this is easy to work around, because you can break up your dance sequence into as many shorter lines as you want (the total notecard limit is 64K, which would have to be a massive sequence). To start a new line, all you need to do is insert a continuation character ("\" backslash) and then return and continue your sequence on the next line.

Example: The sequence below has 304 characters. If I try to load this in the HUD, it will stop at 255 characters, so the last part of the dance won't load:

```
shamo|12.9|sync|19.4|shake the maracas|19.0|full of it|17.5|sync|18.7|shake the  
maracas|18.9|precious morning|18.4|fancy free|15.8|center of the  
universe|18.2|hydrogen|37.3|shamo|18.4|lollipop|16.7|live forever|39.2|breathless|1.5|tick  
tock|37.4|shamo|18.3|galvanize|16.8|live forever|39.2|breathless|1.5
```

You can fix this by breaking it up into two lines, using the \ and a return:

```
shamo|12.9|sync|19.4|shake the maracas|19.0|full of it|17.5|sync|18.7|shake the  
maracas|18.9|precious morning|18.4|fancy free|15.8|\
```

```
center of the universe|18.2|hydrogen|37.3|shamo|18.4|lollipop|16.7|live  
forever|39.2|breathless|1.5|tick tock|37.4|shamo|18.3|galvanize|16.8|live  
forever|39.2|breathless|1.5
```

In fact, you can break it up however you want, which may be helpful to organize the sequence into song parts, like verses and choruses. Also, you can put extra returns (blank lines) in your notecard to make it more readable. The HUD will ignore blank lines:

```
shamo|12.9|sync|19.4|shake the maracas|19.0|\  
  
full of it|17.5|sync|18.7|shake the maracas|18.9|\  
  
precious morning|18.4|fancy free|15.8|center of the universe|18.2|\  
  
hydrogen|37.3|shamo|18.4|lollipop|16.7|\  
  
live forever|39.2|breathless|1.5|\  
  
tick tock|37.4|\  
  
shamo|18.3|galvanize|16.8|\  
  
live forever|39.2|breathless|1.5
```

Naming your dance

After you create and load a dance sequence into the HUD from a notecard, you will notice that the name of the dance (normally in Menu 1) is just the name of the first animation in your sequence. You can change this name to something more descriptive (such as the name of the song or the name of the event you made the dance for). To change the name that will appear in the user menu, simply type a keyword and name at the beginning of your dance notecard in the following format:

[name] <dance name>

For example, the following dance will show up as “shamo” in Menu 1:

```
shamo|12.9|sync|19.4|shake the maracas|19.0|full of it|17.5|sync|18.7|shake the maracas|18.9|precious morning|18.4|fancy free|15.8
```

By adding the name, the dance will now show up as “Super Cool Dance” in Menu 1:

```
[name]Super Cool Dance\  
shamo|12.9|sync|19.4|shake the maracas|19.0|full of it|17.5|sync|18.7|shake the maracas|18.9|precious morning|18.4|fancy free|15.8
```

Creating a Group Dance Sequence

Group dances can be used to have multiple dancers performing different dance animations at the same time. This adds a new dimension to dances with partners or teams of dancers.

You will separate the different dance sequences for each group by placing the following keyword format before each sequence:

```
[group]<group name>| ...<insert animation sequence>... |[end]
```

The group name can be any of the standard names found on the “Change dancer groups” menu (accessed from the Admin menu). The allowable group name choices are female, male, lead, left, center, right, group1, group2, group3, group4, and group5. The [end] keyword indicates the end of each dance group sequence.

To create a group dance, you should start by creating a single dance for your lead dancer (see *Creating a Dance Sequence – Single Dancer* above). After pasting this dance in your notecard, you should add the group keyword and name before the first sequence (followed by the “|” character) and place the [end] keyword after the end of the dance sequence. A good technique is to then copy and paste the same sequence again for each dance group you want to create, with a new group keyword and name before each sequence and an [end] keyword at the end of each sequence (not required for the last sequence on the notecard). You can then manually alter the other group dances in each sequence by typing the desired animations in place of the original ones.

Example:

```
[group]group1|\nshamo|12.9|sync|19.4|shake the maracas|19.0|full of it|17.5|sync|18.7|shake the\nmaracas|18.9|precious morning|18.4|fancy free|15.8|[end]\
```

```
[group]group2|\nshamo|12.9|sync|19.4|lollipop|19.0|full of it|17.5|sync|18.7|hydrogen|18.9|tick\ntock|18.4|fancy free|15.8
```

In this example, after copying and pasting the first dance sequence and adding the group name keywords, we replaced the “shake the maracas” (x2) and “precious morning” with “lollipop,”

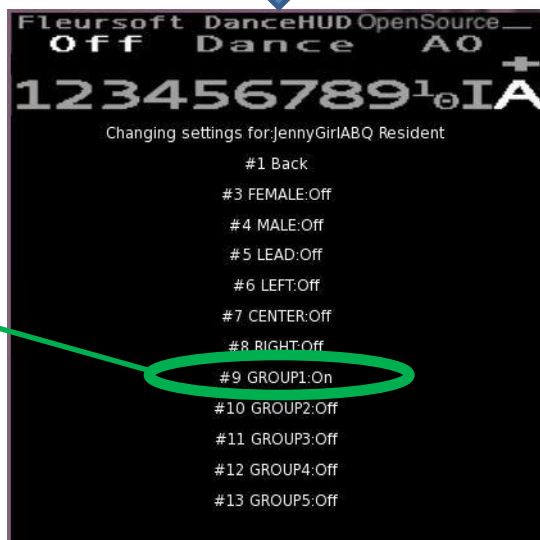
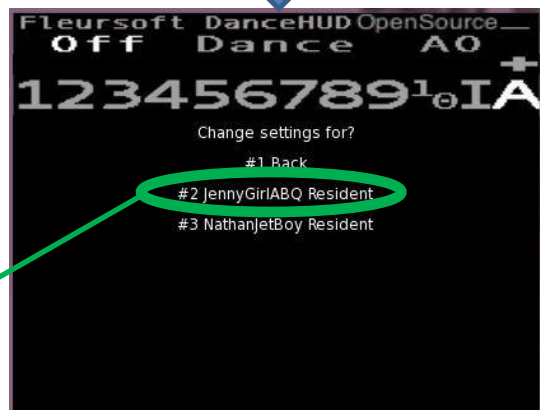
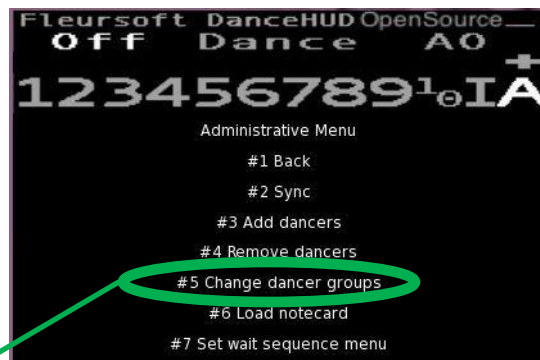
Now that you’ve created your desired dance groups and animations, you will load the notecard into the HUD. Before playing your group dance in Menu 1, you will need to assign each dancer who is on your HUD to the desired dance group. To do this, perform the following steps:

From the Admin Menu, click item #5 “Change dancer groups.”

Click the desired dance group for the selected dancer to toggle it from Off to On. Ensure all the other dance groups are set to Off.

Click “Back” to go to the previous menu and assign the groups for each other dancer. Now you are ready to dance!

Select the desired dancer. This menu will only show dancers who have been added to your HUD.



Choreography Tips

Creating a fun, beautiful and exciting dance just takes a little time and practice. Don't be afraid to experiment and change things many times to get to your final masterpiece. Here are some techniques that will help you:

Selecting a Song

1. Choose a song that fits with the performance theme, and make it one that you really like. Remember, you will hear this song about 50 times as you build and practice your routine, so it better be something you love!
2. Some songs lend themselves better to an exciting routine than others. I like to look for songs that have a dynamic structure, like quiet simple parts mixed with louder energetic parts, so you can use soft, slow animations and transition to faster ones to match the music.
3. You will need to have your song available at an internet location to pass it to the person running the stream for the performance (and they will download it to their computer). You can do this easily by finding the song you want on YouTube and passing the link. If you need to use a song from an mp3 file on your computer, I like to use picosong.com, and you can pass the uploaded link from there. This site is also nice if you want to edit your song (like cutting out something you don't want at the beginning or end) or even to mix two songs or portions of songs together.
4. Make sure you build your dance to the version you will be linking to! Many songs have various versions out there, so if you build your dance with an mp3 from your personal collection and then pass a link to a version that happens to be different on YouTube, your animations won't be aligned with the music.

Choosing Dance Animations

The full perm animations provided with your HUD and in the extra dances pack are great to get started. However, the majority of free animations out there tend to be fast, club-type dances. If you find you really want a different dance-type than what's been provided (like slow, interpretive, contemporary, jazz, ballet, Latin, ballroom), it is easiest to find dances at an animation store in-world. You can play your song on your computer while trying out dances with the store demos to find one that works with the part of your song you want to match. Many of the animations you buy at the top stores are beautiful MOCAP (motion capture) dances using professional live dancers, but they are fairly pricey (150L – 350L per animation). You can get a better deal by buying the packs of animations, but make sure you are going to be able to use most of them, or you may be better off just buying individual dances. A couple of my favorite stores are **Abranimations** and **Henmations**.

Here are a few techniques that may help when planning your animations for you routine:

1. **Find a good starting cue at the beginning of your song.** You will not know when to click your dance sequence to start the dance until you hear the music playing on the stream. For this

reason, you should not build your dance to begin at the exact moment the song begins. You should find something distinctive that occurs a little while (probably at least 5 seconds) after the song begins for your cue. Once you determine the starting cue, start your freestyle recording at that point.

2. **Choose transition points.** Before you sit down to try various animations with your song, it is helpful to just listen to the song and visualize points in the music where it would make sense to change up the dance. You can sketch out your dance framework by jotting down the times (from the time scale on YouTube or your media player) when you want to change animations. These are usually things like song intros, new verses, choruses (the part that everyone knows because it's repeated multiple times), bridges (the part that usually sounds different than the rest of the song), instrumental solos, etc. I also like to make notes at these points to remind me what type of animation I want to use (e.g. mellow part, slow down, big finish, etc.).
3. **Try out animations along with the music.** While you listen to your song, you can click on various animations in the Inventory Menu to find things that fit. Once you find one you like for each part of the song, write it down and move on to the next part. If you want to try animations that haven't been loaded into the HUD, you can just double click on them in inventory and click the window that pops up to play it. If you find ones you like, you can add them to your HUD later.
4. **Make your dance build in excitement.** Start your dance with simple, slower movements, and as the song progresses, try to find animations that add energy to the dance. If there is a slow quiet bridge just before the crazy loud ending chorus, find a mellow animation to use just before the jumping back flips for your big finale!
5. **Record your dance.**
 - a. Turn Freestyle recording ON.
 - b. Start your song playing on your computer.
 - c. When you hear your cue point in the song, start clicking the animations you've chosen at the appropriate times in the song (using your notes).
 - d. Once your dance is done and loaded, don't be scared to change animations you're not happy with. You can simply type the new animation name over the old one and reload the notecard.
6. **For group dances, plan out your movements.** There is a notecard in the package of dance materials with descriptions of many of the basic animations. These are organized by movement, so they are helpful with adding an element of travel to your dancers. For instance, you may want to have a part where the lead dancer moves forward on the stage while the backup dancers stay in one spot. You can select animations for the groups that will accomplish this. You should also make sure your dancers don't collide by having conflicting movement during mixed animation portions. Finally, there are some animations provided that are "waiting" type

animations. These tend to be club animations for swaying to the music, clapping hands, etc., and are great to use when you want one or two dancers to perform a solo while the others are not the center of attention.

Optimizing HUD Performance

The Fleursoft HUD can tend to lag when you have numerous animations loaded in it. In other words, on performance day when the auditorium is full of people and lagging, you may click your dance sequence on Menu 1 and the dancers don't start dancing until 5+ seconds later, making it hard to sync with your cue.

You can reduce the lag by having ONLY the dances needed for your routine loaded in your HUD. Since the HUD is copy, a good technique is to keep your basic Oakdale original HUD full of animations for choosing animations during the build process and make new copies of the HUD for each dance routine you create. Delete the animations you won't be using from the copied HUD contents. You can rename these copies to the name of your routine or performance (e.g. Halloween Show HUD) in the General tab of the edit window.

Advanced HUD

We don't expect anyone to have to spend money to be a part of Oakdale Theatrical Dance, but if you find you really love dance and want to make an investment, you can move up to a more sophisticated system. I personally use and highly recommend the Spot On system if you decide to make the jump. It is not cheap (about 3000L for the parts you need), but is a super system for performance dance (as well as drama, fashion, cheerleading, etc.). You will want to get the Choreography System (~2000L) and the Performance Director HUD (~1000L) for Theatrical Dance. Be warned...this is NOT a standalone dance HUD, so you cannot use it as a conventional dance HUD for clubs, parties, etc. It is built purely for creating professional dance productions. You can find the Spot-On store in-world and visit the website at spotonsl.com. The developers provide great support, the website is full of excellent video tutorials and manuals, and they provide free classes periodically.

Key benefits of the Spot On system:

1. The Choreography System uses "movers" in place of static poseballs to place your dancers at the start. You can lay out a movement path on your stage so your dancers will independently travel on these movers wherever you want throughout your routine. The movers can move in three dimensions, so you can have dancers sit on furniture, walk up ramps or stairs, fly through the air...whatever you can imagine. You can even attach props to a mover, so you can have a car drive on stage or a dancer ride off on a flying carpet!
2. When your dancers sit on a mover, it automatically adds them to the Performance Director HUD and assigns them to the dance group for that mover. What does that mean? When you are 2 minutes before showtime and you have to replace a dancer, find a costume, replace part of your set that SL ate, etc., the last thing you need is to have to do 10 mouse clicks to make sure each

dancer is on your HUD and assigned to the correct dance group. This system takes care of it for you!

3. The building of dance sequences uses a timeline concept, where you enter the time each animation begins from the beginning of the song (instead of entering the duration between each animation). This makes it really easy to build dances by just noting the times on the song timescale where you want each new animation to begin. No freestyle recording is required and no math adjustments needed when you tweak the time of an animation starting point.
4. I've used the HUD in busy performances, and it has zero lag. When you click start, the dance starts immediately, so syncing with your song is effortless!